

ENDANGERED TEXAS TREASURES—TEXAS COURTHOUSES

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, no matter where I go, I always meet someone who wants to share a memory about my former life as a criminal court judge in the Harris County courtrooms. Most times, people reminisce about some of the creative punishments that I handed down or about the time they served jury duty in my courtroom. But, sometimes the conversation turned to the courthouse itself, or as I call it, the Palace of Perjury.

I presided over more than 25,000 criminal cases in the Palace of Perjury for 22 years. My particular courtroom was massive. Paneled in a dark wood, it gave off an ominous, serious mood. As it should—some of the worst and most horrid crimes were tried within its walls.

That courthouse—now the Juvenile Courthouse in Harris County—was just one of 235 courthouses in Texas. Each is a symbol of our state's rich history and a symbol of our promise to follow the law and pursue justice. Courthouse construction began in Texas after it won independence from Mexico in 1836. Counties were formed and courthouse construction began in each. Because the counties were booming and populations were increasing, many courthouses served multiple purposes: schools, churches, dancehalls and meeting places, not just a place to settle legal issues. Courthouses became the heart of the town—or the “square” of the town. Here Main Street businesses grew, and communities were shaped. Trials, elections, marriages, parades and festivals are forever linked to our historic courthouses.

At times as a judge, I traveled to other counties to try cases. Along the way, I began to photograph Texas' historic courthouses. I was drawn to their impressive and varied architecture. Built with bricks, stone, and stained glass, some have clock towers; others have domes. Each is unique. I like the Renaissance Revival style of the Anderson County Courthouse and the Romanesque Revival style of Fayette County Courthouse in La Grange. Some like the Newton County Courthouse known for its Second Empire style, while others like the La Salle County Courthouse known for its Moderne-style structure.

Along the way, I learned that other Texas officials shared my love and admiration for our State treasures. In 1993, my friend and then-Governor George W. Bush, together with the Texas Historical Commission, established the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, a plan that provided \$200 million in matching grants to communities working to repair and restore these structures. By the end of 2012, 63 Texas counties have received full funding for their construction project. That includes the Harris County Courthouse—“the Jewel of the South.” Built in 1910, restoration on the courthouse was available through funding from the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program and was completed last year. There's a lot of history in our great State, and it's our responsibility to preserve this rich heritage for future generations.

In 1998 and again in 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named all his-

toric courthouses in Texas to its annual list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Some of those historic courts are located in rural counties with limited funds, but are in need of insurmountable repairs. Unfortunately, some are on the brink of abandonment or demolition. Budgets are tight all around, but I think these treasures are worth saving.

This spring break and summer, as you pack up the family and head across our great state, get off the interstates and drive downtown to any Main Street. There you can share a little Texas history with your kids and grandkids. On each Main Street is a Texas treasure. And that's just the way it is.

HONORING THE LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CAREER OF DR. SAMUEL LAMAR WRIGHT, SR.

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the lifetime of achievements and career of Dr. Samuel Lamar Wright, Sr. Dr. Wright's desire to help others, along with his achievements and service to the Tampa Bay community is worthy of recognition by all.

A native Floridian, Dr. Wright grew up in Boynton Beach. In 1974, he graduated, with honors, from the University of Florida with a degree in Psychology from the College of Arts and Sciences and a degree in Psychological Foundations from the College of Education. He later continued his studies at the University of South Florida where he completed his doctorate in Special Education Administration and Supervision.

After serving as the first black City Councilman in Boynton Beach, Dr. Wright moved to Tampa in 1985. He was hired by the University of South Florida to plan, create and coordinate student programming for minority students. At the time, black students accounted for less than 5 percent of the student population. He made it his mission to improve student enrollment for minorities. He later served for 13 years as the university's assistant director for multicultural admissions, allowing him to recruit, enroll, mentor and retain minority students, fostering diversity on USF's campus. After serving as associate dean of student relations and director of multicultural affairs at USF, Dr. Wright is now the USF student ombudsman, a position where he cherishes the opportunities to mentor students through the challenges of college and cheer on their successes.

Aside from his accomplishments with the University of South Florida, Dr. Wright's commitment to the Tampa Bay community has been unwavering. In 2001, he organized the first Tampa Bay Black Heritage Festival, a multicultural celebration, now held annually, in honor of black history and culture in the Tampa area. Dr. Wright also serves as the vice president of the Hillsborough County NAACP and has served as a Board member with the Tampa Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau. In addition, he is actively involved at the state level as a member of the African American Task Force and, in 2010, he was

appointed by Governor Charlie Crist to serve as a board member of the Florida Fund for Minority Teachers. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Glazer's Children's Museum.

After 27 years with the University of South Florida and countless contributions to the Tampa Bay community, Dr. Wright is retiring. It is clear that he has contributed to the growth and diversity at USF in countless ways, while also influencing and effecting students on a personal level. While his contributions to USF will be missed, his impact on the Tampa area will no doubt continue for years to come.

The Tampa Bay community is proud to recognize Dr. Samuel Lamar Wright, Sr. for his steadfastness and desire to enrich the people of our community. His outstanding career and significant contributions have made him an inspirational leader. I ask that you and all Americans recognize such a remarkable citizen for his service to our community and our state.

HONORING PAT GILARDI

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and thank Pat Gilardi for her many years of visionary leadership on the Cotati City Council, as she is stepping down from her Council duties to accept a position in county government. Ms. Gilardi has been an outstanding leader for the City of Cotati during her 15 years of service, and her hard work and dedication is reflected in the many projects and improvements she nurtured and brought to fruition during that time.

The city and people of Cotati have benefited immensely from Ms. Gilardi's contributions since the start of her career in public service in 1997, when she was appointed to the Cotati Planning Commission. Among the numerous projects Ms. Gilardi spearheaded was the Multi Modal Transit Village, now known as the Santero Way Specific Plan.

Ms. Gilardi would go on to be selected from a large group of applicants to fill a vacancy on the Cotati City Council in October 2000. She was elected to her first full term in November 2002. She was reelected in 2006 and 2010, and she was selected as Mayor in both 2006 and 2008. Ms. Gilardi has worked to guide the City of Cotati to fiscal sustainability, strong environmental policy, transportation alternatives, and quality community services.

In addition to her service on the city council, Ms. Gilardi served on a number of commissions and boards in Sonoma County, including her time as the Director of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) and Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA). While a member of the Board at SCTA, Ms. Gilardi represented the City of Cotati's interests for the Highway 101 widening project and other transportation related issues including securing funds, project oversight and long-term planning.

In addition to her public service, Ms. Gilardi is also the co-founder of the 4-H Club of Cotati, a former two-term president of her local Parent Teacher Association, and sat on the Board of Directors for the Cotati According Festival.